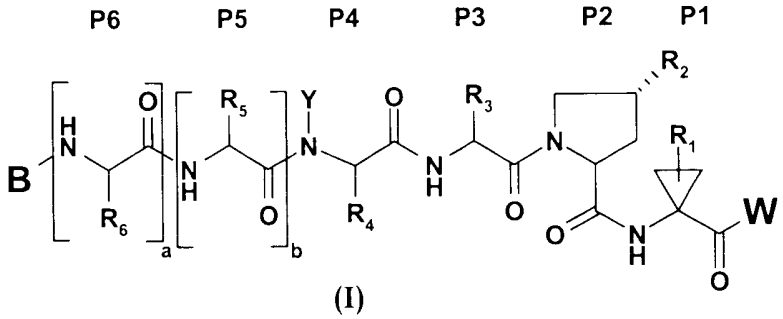
ABSTRACT

Disclosed herein are hepatitis C viral protease inhibitors of formula (I):



(I)

wherein **a** is 0 or 1; **b** is 0 or 1; **Y** is H or C_{1-6} alkyl;

B is H, an acyl derivative or a sulfonyl derivative;

$\mathbf{R_6}$, when present, is C_{1-6} alkyl substituted with carboxyl;

$\mathbf{R_5}$, when present, is C_{1-6} alkyl optionally substituted with carboxyl;

$\mathbf{R_4}$ is C_{1-10} alkyl, C_{3-7} cycloalkyl or C_{4-10} (alkylcycloalkyl);

$\mathbf{R_3}$ is C_{1-10} alkyl optionally substituted with carboxyl, C_{3-7} cycloalkyl or C_{4-10} (alkylcycloalkyl);

$\mathbf{R_2}$ is CH_2-$\mathbf{R_{20}}$, NH-$\mathbf{R_{20}}$, O-$\mathbf{R_{20}}$ or S-$\mathbf{R_{20}}$, wherein $\mathbf{R_{20}}$ is a saturated or unsaturated C_{3-7} cycloalkyl or C_{4-10} (alkyl cycloalkyl) being optionally mono-, di- or tri-substituted with $\mathbf{R_{21}}$, or $\mathbf{R_{20}}$ is a C_6 or C_{10} aryl, C_{7-16} aralkyl, Het or (lower alkyl)-Het, all optionally mono-, di- or tri-substituted with $\mathbf{R_{21}}$, wherein $\mathbf{R_{21}}$ is as defined herein;

$\mathbf{R_1}$ is C_{1-6} alkyl, C_{2-6} alkenyl or C_{2-6} alkynyl, all optionally substituted with halogen; and

W is hydroxy or a N-substituted amino; or **W** taken together with the carbonyl group to which it is bonded represents an ester group, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.